



THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR  
WASHINGTON

NOV 20 2002

Outer Continental Shelf Policy Committee  
Minerals Management Service  
381 Elden Street  
Herndon, Virginia 22070

Dear OCS Policy Committee:

Please accept my regrets for not being able to attend your meeting. I note that this meeting occurs as we near the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary year for the Minerals Management Service.

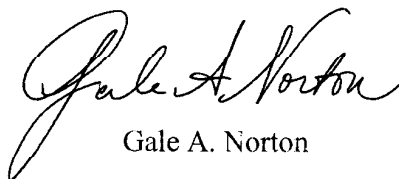
As the year closes, it is increasingly apparent that the role of Federal offshore lands in the Nation's energy equation has become a preeminent one. Offshore public lands now account for almost 30 percent of domestic oil production and over 27 percent of its natural gas production. This role will become increasingly important in the coming decade as production from the OCS is projected to provide 40 percent of domestic oil production by the time MMS reaches its 30<sup>th</sup> year.

An important accomplishment is the offshore industry's environmental record on preventing oil spills that is reflected in the recent report titled "Oil in the Sea" from the National Academy of Sciences. Industry's response to last month's tropical storm and hurricane demonstrates how far we have come in protecting the environment from potential pollution even in the midst of natural adverse circumstances.

These achievements are not happenstance but result from a coordinated and cooperative effort by the program stakeholders—the offshore oil and gas industry, coastal states with offshore production, other Federal agencies, and industry and environmental public interest groups.

The Department of the Interior can learn a lesson from this effort characterized by cooperation, communication, and consultation in the conservation of our natural resources. Indeed MMS program efforts mirror my own philosophical approach to achieving the conservation and preservation goals of the Department. As we move forward in pursuit of the reasonable use of our public lands, I welcome your advice on how best to balance energy needs with other concerns, especially when it comes to an equitable consideration of national and state interests.

Sincerely,



Gale A. Norton